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# Amesbury

## Traffic and Transportation Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Date: June 3, 2021  
Start: 7:00 PM Virtual Meeting  
Attendees: Christopher Falcos, Robert Desmarais, Owen Corcoran, Christine Miller, Matt Einson, Jim Nolan, Lauren Tirone.

- Minutes from the previous meeting were approved (Rob motion to approve, Jim 2<sup>nd</sup>, Roll call to approve: Lauren-yes, Chris-yes, Rob-yes, Owen-yes, Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Matt-yes).

### Old Business

- Changes to short-term parking downtown, outdoor seating and 15 minute parking spaces by Angela Cleveland.
  - Angela stated that there is a new addition to the downtown and it is called the Holiday Wine Shop, and they are located at 15 Friend Street. They would like to take the jersey barriers that are in front of the Fortune Bar and move them directly across the street to allow for outdoor dining for their space in front of 15 Friend Street. Angela stated that the only thing that has not happened is that we have not touched base with Rob, the Fire Department and the Police Department to see if there would be any issues with moving the installation to in front of 15 Friend Street, and she did not think there would be.
  - Matt asked if there were any questions from the members of the committee. Jim just asked Angela to repeat where this was going to happen. Angela stated 15 Friend Street, which is right next to Wild Garlic. Angela explained that it would be the same installation that is in front of Fortune Bar, and that it would just be moved across the street. In addition the Fortune Bar has requested that they remove their installation. The installation and barriers would only take up two spaces and would have 5 tables seating 3 people with a total of 15 people. Matt asked if there were any more questions from the committee. Matt asked if this is where the skate shop used to be, to which Caitlin stated yes. Matt then asked when this would be up and running. Caitlin said they were hoping for mid-July. Matt asked if there were any more questions, to which there were none. Matt asked for a motion on this request. Owen made a motion to move the barriers across the street in front of 15 Friend Street for the new wine bar. The motion was seconded by Chris. There were no other comments. Roll call vote: Lauren-yes, Chris-yes, Rob-yes, Owen-yes, Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Matt-yes. Motion passed.

- Request for a 4-Way Stop at the intersection of Pond Street and High Street by Gage Foley.
  - Matt asked Rob if there were any updates on this item. Rob stated that money would be available late July, and he would see if the Mayor will allow it to go forward. Rob's suggestion is we make a recommendation to the Mayor to proceed with funding for a traffic study. Matt asked Rob to explain again what the funding was for. Rob stated that the funding would be so we could do traffic counts at the intersection to make sure we could do a 4-way stop there. Matt asked Chris to elaborate on why that is necessary in terms of being able to put in a 4-way stop. Chris said that the MUTCD, Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, is the standard for all traffic control device such as stop signs and traffic lights, etc., stated and they have science-based numbers on when you should be using a 4-way stop or a 2-way stop, or any form of stop signs. It is usually based on traffic counts and it is very rigorous and based off numerous studies, so with a traffic study we would be able to see if it would qualify for a 4-way stop at this location. Matt asked if that was a mandate or a recommendation. Chris stated it was a mandate and he believes the language said, "You should" follow what it says and MassDOT is pretty strict about following that rule and for example in West Newbury they removed a stop sign that was put up erroneously. The language states, "The decision to install multi-way stop controls should be based on and engineering study," and then it lists the criteria. Councilor Wheeler had some questions about the item. Councilor Wheeler asked Rob how much money is needed to do the traffic count and is this something you can do in house with your own equipment or are you hiring a consultant. Rob advised they would be hiring a consultant and it would be between \$5,000-10,000. Councilor Wheeler stated he was asking because he was not sure what the process was, if it was something the Council could regulate or if it was something they needed to ask KP Law about or if it was just based on waiting on these traffic counts as Chris just said. Councilor Wheeler went on to say that if it is required that we do a traffic count and one has to be funded then that is perfectly understandable.
  - Matt asked if any other member of the public wanted to speak on this item, to which there was none. This item will be continued to the next meeting.
- Workshop discussion on abutter notices by Rob Desmarais.
  - Matt asked Rob if there was any update on this item. Rob stated yes and that he got approval from the Mayor to do this so every time an agenda item comes in we will send out a Swift 911 notice to all the abutters within 300 feet of the item. So if you are doing a 4-way stop we would do 300 feet around the 4-way stop. If they want speed limit signs changed on a certain street we will do 300 feet within that area. It will also be posted on Facebook, and this will go for every item on the agenda going forward if this is approved. I don't have any formal approval and it seems like simple solution. I was trying to get the applicants to do this, and there was no easy way without making it a Planning Board/ConCom type of process where they would have to do certified mail and get an approved abutter's list from the Assessor, but this seems like the simplest solution. DPW would do this as a matter of course, so as soon as an item comes in we would send that out. We would have to have a cut-off/deadline for the agenda, which I suggest a week

at least so if we get an item that comes in later than a week before the meeting then it would get pushed to the following meeting.

- Lauren asked Rob as the secretary she gets a lot of these traffic requests and that when she gets one she would then forward directly to Rob, to which Rob stated yes. Lauren just wanted to make sure that only one person would get the requests and then forward those to Rob so there would be no confusion or doubling up on the forwarding of requests. Rob agreed.
- Matt asked if there were any other questions by members of the committee. Matt asked Rob that it sounds like we are relying on Swift 911 and Facebook, to which Rob stated yes. Matt asked Rob if he knew what the participation was on Swift 911. Rob stated it was less than 60%. Matt said that there is a reasonable probability that some of the abutters will not get the notification, and asked Rob if that was correct, to which Rob stated absolutely. Matt asked how Rob felt about that because some are going to say that they never knew about it. Rob said that is how it is now and we don't do it. We follow the state minimum where it is posted and we have this problem repeatedly, at least a couple of times a year where we get blow back on a significant issue because we didn't notify people in any kind of acceptable manner. Rob went on to state that this is why he has struggled with this for months because short of having a formal process where they have to get a certified abutter's list within a certain distance of the item, which is difficult for an applicant to quantify because if it is more generic like speeding concerns on Estes Street what do you tell the Assessor's office what the abutter range is. The applicant would then have to go and spend potentially hundreds of dollars on certified mailings, which is really the best way, and I am perfectly willing to do that than have me have to do a Swift 911 for every item on the agenda a week before the meeting, but this seems like the simplest solution that hits the bulk of the people, and right now we almost zero process so I think this is a vast improvement, but I am perfectly willing to go with everyone do a certified mailing. But a perfect example is when we did the Rocky Hill Road thing which has a quarter of the town impact to residents, how do you come up with an abutter's list for that, and to be frank, we are not going to get every resident and even abutter's lists sometimes miss people. The abutters can sell, move in, they could be renters, there is no perfect process but this is this Occam's Razor version of the abutter notification that I could come up with. Lauren said that in addition to doing that can it be put up on the City website. Rob stated that it is posted on the website with the posting of the agenda. Lauren agreed and said that any speeding concerns if you want it can go through me, and if there is something specific that they want or need, I may be able to filter those ones out because it maybe just a police matter where we are dealing with running radar, and we get a lot of that so if you want I can contact them and see what they want and see if it is an agenda item I can then forward it to you. A simple speeding request or that someone is speeding down the street may not be a Traffic Committee issue, it depends. Rob said that the scheme that he came up with would require that we have the agenda fixed the week before so I can go through it and send out the notifications, so the agenda would have to be week before so I could give them at least five days' notice before the meeting, but I would much rather them do a certified abutter's list, it would probably free up our agenda a little bit because a lot of these are just questions that come to us that go on the agenda. Rob does not want this process to be like the Planning Board or the ConCom where it is a very

formal application. We have had a very informal committee for the last several years which is very helpful to the community. Matt wanted to know how granular Swift 911 was and could you send it to specific addresses, to which Rob stated yes. Rob stated the way he would do it is map-based so if it is all of Estes Street I would grab all of Estes Street and 300 feet down the street so it would be just drawing a box around it, and I would probably make it 350-400 feet so I wouldn't miss anybody. The system is pretty precise and if the polygon I create even crosses someone's property line it will pick them up. Matt wanted to make a suggestion to make it a first reading, second reading type of thing where the first time it is on the agenda they would come in and talk about what the problem is and we can decide if we would proceed to the next level in that case we would send out the abutter notices, that way you are not sending out abutter notices for everything. It could be that some things get dismissed rather quickly. Rob said that is a way to do it, and he does not object to that but you would then have the situation where we would be potentially discussing an item without notifying abutters. Rob said that he would only have to send out notices on new business and you don't have to do the old stuff because it was continued and if they were interested they would be following along, this is similar to the Planning Board and ConCom where they only notify you for the first notice and you have to follow along with the agendas knowing your item is on there. Rob said we can certainly modify this and he was open to doing it the way Matt suggested and that would be less work for him. Matt wanted to just make a suggestion and that if we needed to modify it we could modify it and that it was not set in stone. Rob would like the committee to adopt or endorse what we are doing here so we are all on the same page. Jim stated he personally did not like the idea but would go along with it and support it if we had to, but he personally is not on Facebook and with Swift 911 only reaching about 60% of the people then some are going to be missed. Jim said that when something comes up to the committee that it is one person's opinion that they want this and that they don't notify the people around them and the ownership should be on them and not on us. If it costs them a little bit of money to send out certified letters than that is fine, but let them go and get the list of who it is going to affect and go with it, he does not think it should be the committee that has to notify people. Rob agreed with Jim and Rob wanted to spend time finding a way to make the applicants do it, but short of an official abutters notice, which is rather expensive, we tried to have them figure out their neighbors and it just did not work. So from DPW's point of view if we put up a No Parking Sign the next day everyone is mad at us the next day because they did not know or did not understand what it was for so I would prefer to have more control over the message of what it is we are voting on. Owen agrees with Rob and Jim but having said that but at what point does this expand out beyond the committee and it just seems that this can become more than we can control.

- Tracey Chalifour asked Rob in this scenario how he would have handled something that happened recently such as what started out as a Rocky Hill Road issue that turned into involving Clark's Road because of how things became interwoven, how would that be addressed in that scenario. Rob said that is what actually prompted this. We started on Rocky Hill Road, then the project crept out and expanded to a corridor study, so at each expansion we would send out a Swift 911 notice to that whole corridor and you would have been notified at the second meeting because the Rocky Hill Road notice was on the agenda the first

time but then when we expanded we would have expanded the notification so that's the other reason this is a little more flexible and we could make a decision of who to notify, whereas if you do a certified abutter's list it is kind of a one-shot deal and it would be hard pressed to ask an applicant to do additional mailings and it would be a couple of grand and so it adds up really quickly. Councilor Wheeler wanted to point out that the Planning Board and the ConCom since they were the examples that were given and they follow that process where for their public hearing they send out abutter notifications. One thing you need to keep in mind is that the abutter notifications associated with the ConCom/Planning Board processes are related directly to property rights between abutters and development requirements and as far as I know if the City is changing traffic regulations, abutters don't necessarily have the same level of rights that they do with Planning Board and ConCom. I understand entirely wanting to get people notified and that's a good aim using Facebook and putting it on the City website and publically posting these meetings, and these are all excellent ways to increase awareness of these issues, but I think there are a lot of things you can do to increase awareness but I think requiring abutter notifications to be paid for by the applicant can be very expensive and for someone to bring forward an issue that is a safety concern to the government should not cost them hundreds if not thousands of dollars, and if that if you wanted abutter notifications to be something that you want to come in to your purview, then maybe that it should be something the City should look into budgeting on the municipal side. Councilor Wheeler stated that he does not think that passing that off to the resident is the right course of action.

- Lauren asked if when previous Mayor re-wrote the Traffic Committee's bi-laws was not included in that and that the Merrimac Street issue brought that forward. Matt agreed. Rob stated that it was not but that was the Mayor's criticism of that process and that was the one thing that prompted this. A similar one was the issue with Clarks Street which prompted a revision of the whole committee. Rob agreed with Councilor Wheeler that the Planning Board and ConCom abutter process is statutorily prescribed and it is there for specific reasons and that is the model I am trying to avoid. Matt wanted to offer one more suggestion. Matt stated Facebook and putting it on the website is passive and you have to go out of your way and look for it, would it be easier for you to do a simple reverse 911 to the Town to say these items are on the agenda please go to the City website for more details. Rob stated it would be much easier but one of the things we discussed with the Mayor is that we don't want to abuse the reverse 911 either, and even what he has proposed is kind of a stretch but the Mayor was ok with it. Lauren said if we do end up going that route I can wait to send you all those things Rob until I send you the agenda that way you will have it all at once. John Stevenson stated that on the whole program regarding the Main Street area John Curtin sent out 121 emails to the residents to let them know, in his defense.
- Matt asked if there was a motion on the process as Rob described it. Rob made the motion that the committee change our abutter notification policy to use Swift 911 and Facebook (City of Amesbury Department of Public Works page) posts for all new business on the agenda and that the agenda will be closed a week before the scheduled meeting and Public Works will do the notification five days before the meeting, Lauren 2<sup>nd</sup>. Roll call vote: Lauren-yes, Chris-yes, Rob-yes, Owen-yes, Christine-yes, Jim-No, Matt-yes. Motion passes 6-1.

- Speeding concerns on Fern Ave by Cider Hill Farm by Beth Scaparotti.
  - Beth was not in attendance. Lauren stated that she emailed everyone that was on the agenda for new business and did not get a response from anyone. Motion to continue to the July before being removed from the agenda by Rob, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lauren. Roll call vote: Jim-yes, Owen-yes, Rob-yes, Christine-yes, Chris-yes, Lauren-yes, Matt-yes. Motion passed.
- Traffic and speeding concerns on Estes Street by Dale Gould, Steven Schissel, Yi Tu, Joseph Meekins, and David Maria.
  - Lauren said she emailed all the parties and she did not hear back from anyone. Motion by Jim to continue one more time to the July meeting before being removed from the agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chris. Roll call vote: Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Owen-yes, Rob-yes, Chris-yes, Lauren-yes, Matt-yes. Motion passed.

### New Business

- Referral of Council Bill 2021-077 – An order to conserve City-owned parcels for open space and recreational use with the intent of referring it to traffic was just to indicate if there were any traffic concerns associated with the conversion of these to open space and recreational use.
  - Matt asked if there were any comments or concerns from the committee. Rob stated he did not have a comment related to traffic on the item. Owen also agreed. No other members had any comments. Matt recommended that we return to City Council that the committee did look at it and had no issues with the order as presented. Rob made the motion, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jim. No discussion. Roll call vote: Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Owen-yes, Rob-yes, Chris-yes, Lauren-yes, Matt-yes. Motion passed.
- Main Street Traffic Improvements for Point Shore (2022) procedure and calendar review by John Stevenson.
  - John Stevenson stated he had a question about protocol. He realized this was a full-faced project that came in from Rob and 2021 is approved with a slight delay for review with Clarks and Main. John asked Rob if he could give an update, but his prime question was in regards to 2022. I believe that the budget or the draft budget is out now and what it he procedure going forward and the calendar so we are not taking too much of the committee's time in regards to this. Rob stated the 2021 calendar year projects will be funding through the Chapter 90 appropriation that comes in in July, and we will execute those this summer. The 2022 projects were no adopted by this committee, so they will have to come back and we do not have a schedule for that. Rob estimated it would be sometime this winter. Given the new abutter notification policy and you are signed up for Swift 911, you will get a phone call from me saying to come to the meeting. Matt asked John if that answered his question. John said that it did in part, but he had one more for clarity and that if we were to check in with the committee in September would that be acceptable and that the four year plan Rob has come up with is excellent and I think all of us would like to make sure that we move forward. Matt advised John that if he wished to check in in September that would be fine. Rob also told John that if could email him or Lauren anytime to check in and he does not necessarily have to create an agenda item but he had no objection to it if he does.

John said he would take his advice and check in with him and Lauren and thanked the committee. Chris wanted to know when Phase I was expected to be completed. Rob said hopefully before the snow falls.

- Request for speed bumps on Lake Attitash Way by Crystal Reed.
  - Crystal Reed was in attendance. Crystal stated that Lake Attitash Way and Lake Attitash Road connect between the Kimball Road intersection and Spindletree Road. The road becomes very narrow after you come down the hill, so when people come up the hill they fly past us. According to Crystal everyone speeds on the road and there are numerous walkers to include children, pets and in the winter it is worse. One side of the road says No Through Street but the other side does not. Crystal would like speeds bumps and possibly another No Through Street on the other side so it would say that on both sides. Crystal said the speed limit down there is 20 mph and that people use it as a cut through from NH to Rte. 110, and GPS will direct people down there.
  - Matt asked if there were any thoughts from the committee. Lauren asked Rob if he knew when they were going to put the new speed limit (25 mph) signage up because if there is a 20 mph speed limit sign down there then it is not valid and she did not know where that came from. Rob said he had a meeting on June 9th with the Mayor and the Chief to go over implementation so he will have a schedule after that. Matt stated that we had some success in the past redirecting people off a busy street using some entries into the Waze application and asked Chris if he remembers what that was in reference to. Chris stated that it was on Rocky Hill Road and he did not think that in this situation it would work because in this case it would be taking a right. Chris noted that he did see that using Google Maps, it does route traffic through Lake Attitash Way, and it does not make any sense. Rob said a few years ago we had a similar issue on Spindletree Road, where they wanted speed bumps. Rob the suggested that we notify everyone in this neighborhood and we propose speed bumps on Lake Attitash Way, two there and maybe three or four on Spindletree. Matt wondered if that could be somehow relayed to Google Maps that there would be speed bumps there and that may keep them from routing traffic down that way. Rob asked if what we did on Rocky Hill Road isn't that to tell them it's not all the way through. Chris said no, it was to say that it was a dangerous left turn and people can check off that they do not want to take a dangerous left turn and Waze has a habit of taking people down roads that can have you take dangerous left turns so you can set it so it won't do that, but in this case it wouldn't have any affect. Even taking a right onto Lake Attitash Road and then a left onto Lake Attitash Way may not be considered a dangerous left turn.
  - Matt asked Rob about the speed bumps and if we needed to make a notification to the neighborhood for next meeting. Lauren asked Matt for clarification if they would be speed humps and not speed bumps. Rob stated they would be speed humps. Matt asked Rob to describe the difference. Rob stated that speed humps are broader and travel distance over it is broader. It is a smoother transition for the car but you still have to slow down. Matt asked if there was some more signage that could go in down there like narrow road or slow down. Rob stated yes but it would be after July. Matt asked for a motion to put up a couple of cautionary signs and pick this up at the next meeting after the notifications have gone out about the speed humps. Chris made the motion to put up caution narrow

road signs on Lake Attitash Way in the area of the Kimball Road intersection and another one next to the Lake Attitash Road intersection, do the Swift 911 to notify abutters about possibly adding speed humps to Lake Attitash Way and Spindle Tree Lane. Rob 2<sup>nd</sup>. Roll call vote: Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Owen-yes, Rob-yes, Chris-yes, Lauren-yes, Matt-yes. Motion passed.

- Request for “Reduce Speed” signage on Old Merrill Street by Dennis Saraiva.
  - Dennis was present at the meeting. He stated he had this item on the agenda in the fall and it was unanimously approved by the committee to put up the signs. Come spring time I reached out to Lauren for an update and she reached out to Rob, who was kind enough to get back to me that it comes out that Old Merrill is actually a state road and asked Rob if that was correct. Rob stated it was. Dennis wanted to know what the status is and how do we move forward with signage right now, and how that works within the committee and the state. Chris stated that he did not know the exact way to proceed but normally we would just contact MassDot District 4, their traffic section and they would deal with this issue. Chris said that he emails for the head of traffic and I could probably forward that over to Dennis and he could send an email to them or he could call the District 4 landline and they could direct his call as well. Dennis then inquired to whether the committee or the City has any jurisdiction over the road at all, to which Chris said no because it is owned and maintained by Mass DOT. Matt asked Chris if it would have more weight if it came from the committee. Chris said that it might, however he used to work at District 4 and he knows the people who work in the traffic section pretty well and they take all public comments pretty seriously. Chris did not know if Rob wanted to contact them as the representative of the City. Rob said he has already contacted his contact at District 4 and he usually gets things done pretty quickly. Rob apologized to Dennis that he just got back from vacation this week and he had not yet followed up with them to see where this issue stands. Rob said that Dennis had wanted the street striped with the increased traffic due to the parking lot at the end of the street. Rob went on to say that this street is not strictly DOT maintained and we the City has ended up doing the plowing and patching potholes, but when we wanted to pave it and spend some significant money on it we realized that it was a state road and pushed it to the stated to see if we could get them to pay for it. Rob stated he would check in the morning and get back to Dennis and copy Chris in on the email and if there as anything in addition that Chris could do that would be great.
  - Matt asked for a motion to continue the matter until the next meeting when we will hopefully have an update. Jim made the motion, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chris. Roll call vote: Owen-yes, Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Rob-yes, Chris-yes, Lauren-yes, Matt-yes. Motion passed.

Next meeting scheduled for July 19 at 7:00 pm and it will be in person.

Motion to adjourn by Jim 2<sup>nd</sup> by Owen. Roll call vote: Owen-yes, Jim-yes, Christine-yes, Rob-yes, Chris-yes, Lauren-yes, Matt-yes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.